



MAGIC VALLEY

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA, & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

- In March 2004, Dell, Inc. announced that it was restructuring its Twin Falls consumer technical support call center, which opened in February 2002, to a business relationship call center. Business relationship represents the largest part of Dell's market share; the outstanding performance and technical skill of the workers in the Twin Falls call center convinced Dell executives to create their company's second such call center in Twin Falls. This has immediate positive consequences. The existing Dell staff will receive (have received?) additional training and certification in partnership with the College of Southern Idaho (CSI). Many of these positions offer a good vertical career ladder and the possibility of higher pay. Since the center will typically be dealing with business, the call center hours are foreseen to be from about 6:00a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, workers will have better hours.
- Blue Lakes Sporting Goods, a long-time Twin Falls retailer, announced that it will be closing, though no exact date was given. The store originally opened in 1962 and expanded into the current building in 1977. Approximately 10 full- and part-time employees will be affected.
- The Twin Falls School District announced proposals for major changes in its vocational-technical education programs. The proposals are to expand and enhance programs so they are more in line with the 21st century workplace. The district plans to work with CSI for agricultural training. The curriculum will contain the traditional basics of farm operations such as welding, woodworking, etc., but will also offer more expanded courses in general farm management, ethics and interpersonal skills to students seeking farm careers. The remaining programs are to be similarly enhanced in scope to encompass a broad range of skills employers are seeking.
- In March 2004, J.R. Simplot Company transferred ownership of its entire 276 acres of facilities in Minidoka and Cassia counties to the city of Burley. At the press conference where the move was announced, Burley Mayor Jon Anderson and Heyburn Mayor George Anderson pledged to work with the Mini-Cassia area to help develop the facilities into an industrial park. Governor Kempthorne called the industrial park a launching pad from which the unemployed workers in the area can derive hope. Officials envision that the industrial park will be home to such businesses as ice cream or cheese processors, distributors, ethanol operations, cold storage facilities, trucking operations, etc., that could eventually employ 600-800 direct workers with an annual economic impact to the Mini-Cassia area of up to \$100 million.
- In August 2004, Idaho Commerce & Labor Director Roger Madsen and other dignitaries welcomed the Hilex Poly Company to Jerome. Hilex Poly refurbished the Moore North American Building south of Jerome and started production in January. Hilex Poly was formerly known as High Density Film Products Division of Sonoco Products Co., a \$3 billion global packaging manufacturer headquartered in South Carolina. The division was started in 1980 as a manufacturer of high-density polyethylene t-shirt bags. In December 2003, the division was sold to Hilex Poly Co., LLC, a plastics company founded in 1979. Hilex Poly, also headquartered in South Carolina, has four other plants—in South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Texas. Rex Vaughn, the company's chief operating officer, said it was the workforce that attracted Hilex Poly to the area. Hilex Poly began hiring 40-50 workers in late November 2004 to begin production in January 2005. It also plans to phase in 40-50 more workers about every six months until a workforce of 200 is hired by late 2006. Wages are competitive with full benefits.
- In August 2004, Gossner Foods, Inc., a Logan, Utah-based company, became the first business to announce it would move into the newly formed Mini-Cassia Industrial Park in Heyburn (the former Simplot Plant). Gossner Foods, Inc., intends to occupy a 40,000-square-foot building in the park and expand by an additional 50,000-square feet. Dolores Gossner Wheeler, Gossner's president and CEO, stated that it was the Mini-Cassia area's friendliness, workforce and overall positive business environment that attracted the company to the area. She also praised the area dairy farmers and indicated that milk supply is excellent. Gossner hopes to be completed with construction in October 2005 and will initially employ 35 workers at competitive wages and full benefits. This announcement heralded a turnaround of the Mini-Cassia economy and, coupled with other new business openings, signaled a strong economic stimulus to help stabilize and diversify the Mini-Cassia economy. The result should be lower unemployment with less seasonal fluctuations.
- Governor Kempthorne announced seven grants totaling \$418,092 for water projects that will save over 20,000 acre-feet of water in the Magic Valley each year. These funds are from the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Mitigation Program. Grants were awarded to:
 - » Buckeye Ditch Company (\$19,370) to line and seal a high loss ditch, mitigating 1,450 acre-feet a year.

- » Buckeye Farms, Inc. received \$184,005 to install a pumping plant and pipeline, mitigating 11,600 acre-feet per year.
- » Canyon Springs Golf Course and Fish Farm received \$23,090 to install a pump back system, mitigating 2,600 acre-feet a year.
- » Clear Springs Food received \$76,752 to construct a pump back system, mitigating 2,900 acre-feet per year.
- » Fisheries Development Company received \$77,500 to reroute a pipeline system, mitigating 1,450 acre-feet a year.
- » Rangen, Inc. received \$37,375 to modify pipeline and install a pump, mitigating 185 acre-feet per year.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) announced that Twin Falls will be the site of its fourth temple in Idaho. Boise and Idaho Falls each have a temple and plans for a new one in Rexburg is in the works. The temple will be constructed on the site of the former Candleridge Golf Course along Eastland Boulevard in northeast Twin Falls near the Magic Valley Mall. Typically, the LDS Church hires local workers and contractors of any religious affiliation for the construction. It is estimated that as many as 150-300 construction jobs will be created in various construction occupations for a period of 12 to 18 months. No construction timeline has been announced.
- Twin Falls issued a building permit to Lowe's Company to construct a new store on Blue Lakes Boulevard North in Twin Falls. Lowe's, based in Mooresville, N.C., will build a 169,793-square-foot store and garden center at 1350 Blue Lakes on the 20-acre former site of Weston Plaza and convention center. The Lowe's store is part of development group Blackhawk LLC's planned commercial development that will allow for completion of North College Road from Blue Lakes Boulevard to Locust Street North. Plans include a four-way stoplight at the intersection of Blue Lakes and North College. Lowe's currently operates stores in Nampa and Boise and a new store is under construction in Idaho Falls. The Twin Falls store is expected to employ over 200 people; approximately 80 percent of its jobs are full-time. No definite opening date has been set.
- The Hailey Chamber of Commerce Visitors' Center moved to Main Street in May 2004, sharing space with the Blaine County Office of Idaho Commerce & Labor on the corner of Main Street and Myrtle. This is the first time that these entities have shared an office. The idea was sparked by the merger of the two state agencies (Commerce and Labor). Hailey Chamber Executive Tom Smith expects that the increased visibility afforded on Main Street will bring more people through the center, while the partnership with Idaho Commerce & Labor will foster economic development in the city. The new center is staffed by a corps

of volunteers and was the first such partnership in the state.

- Jayco, Inc., a recreational vehicle manufacturing company, has started its recruitment process to hire workers for its new assembly facility in the Norco Building in south Twin Falls. Jayco, Inc., headquartered in Middlebury, Indiana, is one of the largest manufacturers of recreational vehicles in the United States. The company plans to hire 50-80 workers in the next two years for management, welder and assembler positions.
- A trailer manufacturer based in Kanawha, Iowa, is opening a plant in Gooding that could create as many as 75 jobs. Kiefer Built LLC plans to lease the 120,000-square-foot Arkoosh Produce Building and to hire as many as 20 employees in spring 2005, eventually expanding to 75 welders, assemblers and maintenance personnel. Wages will be competitive with full benefits. The recruitment was the result of statewide participation and assistance from many Idaho agencies.

2005 OUTLOOK

- The outlook for the 2005 economy in South Central Idaho would be outstanding except for one vital ingredient: water. The area has been predominantly agricultural since the days of the Oregon Trail. Men in Idaho's history, like I.B. Perrine, and others knew how to create a Magic Valley by getting water where it was needed, when it was needed. These early settlers tapped into the vast underground river—or aquifer—that appears on the surface in an impressive cascade of a thousand springs from a canyon wall along the Snake River near Hagerman. However, intensive ground use in the 1990s, coupled with atypical weather factors (including six years of drought), has brought the region to the threshold of difficult times. Prudent water practices, immediate correction of wasteful action and infrastructure repair needs to be implemented. Serious water litigation could cause huge cracks in one of the most viable economies in the state. If cooperation is reached, it is expected that strong growth in the manufacturing sector and new growth in cheese processing in the area will be strong with excellent job creation. Numerous construction projects, such as the LDS temple and the new Lowe's Store in Twin Falls, the possibility of a new Wal-Mart Supercenter, Burley and Rupert sewer projects and new housing, will create an extremely strong economy in 2005.

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